

DESTINATIONS

THEME PARKS

ALSO IN
DESTINATIONS*SPAIN*

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Get up to speed with what's new in theme parks and give your customers a thrill, says Katie McGonagle

RIDE THE **WAVE**

Fancy racing like a Formula One driver, scuba diving with dolphins or taking a sneak peek behind the scenes of Harry Potter? Whether your clients want heart-pumping thrills and spills or a gentle ride in the teacups, there's a theme park to suit.

Maximise your selling skills by staying up to date with the latest rides and attractions across the globe with our round-up of what's new for 2012.

● THE US

It's an exciting year across the pond with dozens of new

attractions. **SeaWorld Orlando** is opening a 360-degree dome on April 27 to show the fascinating life cycle of the sea turtle in 3D, from hatching on a beach and making a mad dash for open waters to the treacherous journey to lay their own eggs. There are fresh and saltwater habitats next door so visitors can see the real thing too. Watch out for the upcoming Antarctica – Empire of the Penguin attraction due to open in 2013.

Get even closer to nature at **Discovery Cove's** new Freshwater Oasis, where families can see ▶

travelweekly.co.uk/destinations



TurtleTrek opens at SeaWorld Orlando on April 27



Freshwater Oasis opens this spring at Discovery Cove, Orlando

TOP TIP
Do Something Different offers a second day free for customers who buy one-day Universal Studios Hollywood tickets



marmosets and Asian otters as they float through water-filled trails with a rainforest canopy overhead, or soak up some Florida sunshine on relaxing in-water chairs.

Budding vets can also see real operations, lab tests and examinations as the animal care centre at **Busch Gardens** opens its doors, with glass walls and audio systems so visitors can speak to the professionals as they work. Science-loving youngsters can get involved with interactive games.

It's a good time to head to **Wet 'n Wild Orlando** as it introduces a sandcastle-themed Kids' Park this summer, its first new attraction in four years and the largest of its kind in Florida, with two pools, 17 slides and more than 160 soakers, jets and waterfalls.

Legoland Florida's new water park also opens this summer, with a wave pool, build-a-raft lazy river and body slides, while Legoland California's swashbuckling adventure ride, **Pirate Reef**, opens in May. **Parent**

company **Merlin Entertainments** is also launching other attractions stateside: a **Sea Life Aquarium** and **Legoland Discovery Centre** in Kansas City, and a discovery centre in Atlanta.

Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World Resort Florida is being expanded with a new circus area, **Dumbo The Flying Elephant** attraction, junior coaster and a **Seven Dwarfs Mine Train**. There's a new **Art of Animation** hotel too – the resort's 25th – opening in phases from May, with 1,120 suites and 800 rooms themed on *Finding Nemo*, *Cars*, *The Lion King* and *The Little Mermaid*.

Universal Orlando Resort has upgraded *The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man* to high-definition 3D, and added a *Despicable Me* adventure designed by the film's creators and voiced by the original actors. Movies also provide inspiration for the new



Manta is a new rollercoaster at SeaWorld San Diego



Disney says guests at its new Art of Animation hotel in Florida 'will feel like they're staying in a Disney story'



Transformers: The Ride at **Universal Studios Hollywood**, which blends an original storyline with sophisticated special effects and an elaborate flight simulator.

Adrenaline junkies can head to **SeaWorld San Diego** for **Manta**, an exhilarating rollercoaster with manta ray-shaped carriages which fly through twists and turns at more than 40mph, with a stomach-lurching 54ft drop.

● **THE UK**

As families cut back on second holidays, theme parks can be a great way to fit in another mini-break without blowing the budget. They don't even have to go far, with plenty of the UK's top attractions featuring exciting new rides this year.

Chessington World of Adventures is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a new



Stay in an Ice Age suite at Alton Towers hotels


 Watch a 3D version of *The Little Prince* at Futuroscope

show, Dreamworks Madagascar Live, bringing kids' favourite film characters to the stage, and a special '25 Days of Adventure' events programme from July 1 (limited-edition tickets are £25).

Movie magic is also coming to **Alton Towers** and Italian park **Gardaland** as they introduce the Ice Age Experience, combining 3D film footage with physical effects like icy blasts and bubbles. The on-site hotels in each park also feature special Ice Age suites.

Thorpe Park bosses are promising the most extreme thrill ever with The Swarm, opening in spring. The £20 million ride is the world's first winged rollercoaster and includes a 39-metre headfirst drop under the wings of a plane wreckage.

Yorkshire's **Lightwater Valley** is also trying to attract thrill seekers, rebranding itself as The Ultimate Adventure before reopening on March 24. Meanwhile, **Paultons Family Theme Park** in Hampshire, which includes Peppa Pig World, has launched Magma, a 25-metre-high 'drop and twist' tower ride around a volcano.

At **Drayton Manor**, near Tamworth, the Ben 10 rollercoaster has proved so popular that new live shows based on the Cartoon Network character are being introduced.

Of course, any theme park update wouldn't be complete without the much-anticipated **Warner Bros Studio Tour London – The Making of Harry Potter**, which opens next week. Visitors to the Hertfordshire venue can go behind the scenes of the magical movie series for a glimpse of the Great Hall, Dumbledore's office, the Weasley kitchen and Harry's cupboard under the stairs. The sets contain many details not seen on screen.

Legoland Windsor, meanwhile, is transporting visitors to a galaxy far, far away with a new Star Wars Miniland attraction, featuring scenes from the film series depicted in Lego, plus a 150-room hotel opening this month.

Star Wars Miniland at Legoland Windsor

FAST FACT
Legoland is due to launch in Asia this year with a park in Malaysia featuring more than 40 rides

● **EUROPE**
Legoland Billund in Denmark is getting ready to open Polar Land, where guests can ride in a Polar X-plorer and see penguins up close,

while **Legoland Germany** is celebrating its 10th birthday with an adventurous Flying Ninjago ride in Little Asia, opening in May.

Germany's **Europa-Park** is returning to its roots by building a huge wooden rollercoaster, Wodan, and opening a fifth themed hotel, Bell Rock, to open this summer.

Angry Birds, the smartphone app phenomenon, has already spawned cookbooks, a Nickelodeon cartoon and merchandise galore. Now the little tweeters are getting their very own theme park as Finland's **Särkänniemi Adventure Park** opens Angry Birds Land, featuring a mix of rides and amusement park games, this

SAMPLE PACKAGES

Attraction World has Disneyland Paris two-day two-park hopper tickets for £109 per adult and £98 per child.
attractionworld.com
0871 7008888

Do Something Different offers a single ticket for both Loro Parque and Siam Park in Tenerife, priced £43 for adults and £29 for children.
dosomethingdifferent.com
020 8090 3890

Superbreak offers Harry Potter studio tour tickets and one night for a family of four in Travelodge Watford with breakfast for the adults from £181 in April.
superbreak.com/agents

Funway Holidays offers seven nights in a Disney-themed suite at the new Art of Animation Hotel, Orlando, from £3,685 for a family of four, including transfers and flights with Virgin Atlantic, for travel in October.
funway4agents.co.uk
0844 557 0626

summer. If the park does well, the franchise is expected to be rolled out around the world.

It's a year of birthdays in France, as **Disneyland Paris** celebrates 20 years of magic and **Futuroscope** marks its 25th anniversary.

Disney's celebrations start on April 1 with a dazzling light show at Sleeping Beauty Castle and a huge new parade, while Futuroscope has added special effects show iMagic and a 3D version of *The Little Prince* which takes its audience through a submarine world of flora and fauna.

In Spain, the new €20 million 'hypercoaster' at **PortAventura** is expected to open in summer, becoming the tallest coaster on the continent, at 76 metres high, and, with reported top speeds of more than 80mph, the fastest.

Siam Park in Tenerife has opened a VIP villa for 15 people – perfect for families travelling together – and is enlarging its Kids' Zone, plus planning work has started on tornado-based ride Kinaree. Fellow Tenerife attraction **Loro Parque** also has some exciting additions this year, with new white Bengal tigers, baby dolphins and orcas, and tiny meerkats and marmosets. Youngsters can also marvel at amazing species during a new parrot show, updated to include multimedia effects.

● MIDDLE EAST

The pitter-patter of happy feet can be heard at **Ski Dubai** as a colony of 20 gentoo and king penguins brought from SeaWorld San Diego delight crowds with their daily parades. Enthusiasts can also book a Peng-Friend Encounter to see the lively creatures close up.

Dubai Mall's **Sega Republic** has expanded its amusement arcade with games including Treasure



Formula Rossa is a draw for thrill-seekers at Ferrari World, Dubai



Penguins are a new addition at Ski Dubai

Quest and Frogger, while **KidZania** celebrated its second birthday with a Colours of the World display where the mini-city was divided into different continental zones.

Aquaventure at Atlantis, The Palm, in Dubai has a thrilling range of waterslides and rapids to suit all ages, but real water babies will want to try the new dolphin scuba programme at sister park **Dolphin Bay**, where guests go under the water to touch, hug and feed the dolphins.

It's all-change at **Wild Wadi** waterpark, which has removed its landmark waterslide, Jumeirah Sceirah, to make space for a new adrenaline-pumping ride being unveiled later this year.

Abu Dhabi's **Ferrari World** continues to give its guests a thrill with Formula Rossa, the world's fastest rollercoaster, which goes from 0-60mph in less than two seconds, and will host screenings of this year's entire Formula One grand prix season. **TW**



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